SERMONS

FOR THE GENERAL

FAST DAY.

Wo to thee, O land! when thy King is a Child and thy Princes eat in the morning. Eccleſiaſtes x. 16.

Behold ye faſt for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs. Is not this the faſt that I have choſen? to looſe the bands of wickedneſs, to undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye brake every yoke.
Iſaiah lviii. iv. 6.

——— *Sine cæde & vulnere pauci*
Deſcendunt reges, & ſicca morte tyranni.
JUVENAL, Sat. 16.

By the Rev. JAMES MURRAY,

OF *NEWCASTLE.*

Author of SERMONS to ASSES, &c. &c.

LONDON:

Printed for J. ADAMS, No. 10, Great Turnſtile, Holborn; and ſold by T. AXTELL, at the Royal Exchange; and all other Bookſellers in Town and Country.

MDCCLXXXI.

[Price ONE SHILLING.]

43.
4 6
538

TO THE

DIGNITARIES

OF THE

Church of *England.*

My Lords,

YOU always provide the inferior Clergy, your *menial Church Servants,* with a form of prayer to be uſed on the day of national faſting, but you totally neglect to furniſh them with ſermons ſuitable for ſuch an occaſion.—Your remiſſneſs in this particular is perfectly conſiſtent with the tenor of your conduct: — You concur in the appointment of General Faſts; but, when you wallow in exceſs and riot, alas! you leave your curates, poor ſouls, to experience the practical *part of faſting.* In this you follow the example of your ancient friends the *Phariſees*—"You bind heavy burdens, and grievous "to be borne, and lay them on men's ſhoul-"ders, but you will not move them with one "of your fingers."

How

How often, my Lords, have you ſquandered more money at *one entertainment*, than two or three curates have for the ſupport of themſelves and their numerous families for a whole year?—The reflection would make any perſon bluſh, except *a modern Biſhop*—Your conſciences are now ſtupified through voluptuouſneſs, but the day is nigh at hand when your titles will not avail, nor your lawn ſleeves and mitres protect you from the righteous judgment which will be paſſed upon every one. When men will not receive a partial ſentence or be judged according to their external appearance, but where all diſtinction of characters will be laid aſide.

The Author of the following diſcourſes, having during the courſe of his life lived at a conſiderable diſtance from the *Court* is ununaccuſtomed to flattery; you will therefore excuſe his freedom—The language is plain and unequivocal; but perhaps there is more truth contained in them than if written by an *archbiſhop*.

SER-

SERMONS

FOR THE ENSUING

FAST-DAY.

Eccleſiates. x. 16. *Wo to the O land! when thy King is a child and thy Princes eat in the morning.*

THIS land in which we live, one would think, has no reaſon to be afraid of the firſt part of this heavy wo in the text; for the Sovereign of the Britiſh Empire has himſelf a numerous and beautiful family of children, which in *one* ſenſe clears him of the imputation of being a *child*. With reſpect to the latter part of this wo, there may be ſome reaſon to heſitate. The word in the text which ſignifies Princes, is not confined in its ſignification to Princes of the Blood Royal, but may alſo be applied to Chief Men, or the companions of princes,—or it may

 be

be uſed to ſignify Privy Counſellors, or Miniſters of State. When perſons of this character mind eating in the morning more the *neceſſary* buſineſs of the commonwealth it is truly a woful thing to any nation.

The Hebrew word (כבקו) here ſignifies to *be given to voluptuouſneſs*, or to behave like children, —to run to their food before they apply to their buſineſs. The wiſe man ſeems to have had in his view, a King and Princes of like characters, and both reſembling children in their conduct and behaviour. The learned have ſaid ſome ſtrange things upon this paſſage, which I ſhall not here tranſlate. (a) But it appears ſufficiently

---

(a) שמלכך נע.ו Cujus rex peur וס ætate unde rerum imperitus eſt & regendi imprudens aliorum ductui obnoxius. Multa mala evenire in regnis ſolent ubi ſucceſſio ad puerum devoluta eſt. Tutores enim ſæpe non ex fide rem gerunt, aut inter ſe diſcordant; neque puero ſatis authoritati eſt ad retinendos in officio populos. Exemplo in Joaſo, 2 Reg. 11. & poſt Aneo Marco Romæ Arcadii & Honorii ætate in imperio romano. Interdum ſecus audit, dum pietas & bona indoles, & boni conſiliarii, &c. defectum ætatis ſupplent. (2.) Uel potius ſenſu, ſive intellectu & moribus ut oſtendit antitheſis.—Sive ſumatur ut 2 Parl. 13. 7. Notare Balial aut MALI libros.

Puer, i. e. imperitus rerum & petulans, ſecurus puerilitur gerit, res regniſui nihil curans; impotens ſtultus impius ignarus, verſalitis vanus iracundus, timidus voluptatibus deditus, de quo agit ſequenti membro כבקוראכלו deſignant, luxui dedit ſunt כבקו mane, ut pueri ante vertentes tempus ubi capiendi & primam atque optimam diei partem conſumentes. Hæc loquendi forma utitur quando principes conſiliarii, &c. Adeo non reprehendunt vitia regum, ut iis ſe conforment, palpantur luxuriantur, tota nocte & mane, &c. Il Rex puer diſſolutos reddit principes & utrique populum peſſundant.

This note which was publiſhed an hundred years ago and upwards, is ſomewhat like the ſpeech of a certain noble Lord

evident that Solomon, underſtood in this place, by eating and drinking in the morning, (for the word ſignifies both) thoſe nocturnal revels where people ſit up till three or four in the morning, and go to reſt when they ſhould go to buſineſs, and are not fit for employment till mid-day. This is a moſt woful practice for both ſoul and body; for health and buſineſs, for public and private affairs. For in the firſt place, it is a prepoſterous way of waſting time, by turning day into night, and waſting health, inſenſibly, by wearing out the animal ſpirits for want of reſt and natural refreſhment. For any perſon who is poſſeſſed of half a grain of human nature, muſt know, that if he is employed as he ought to be through the day, he will be inclined to reſt when night approaches; or if he does not enjoy reſt ſuitably in the night, he will be but very unfit for his employment next day. It is no wonder that their *Excellencies* and *Lordſhips*, manage public affairs aukwardly, with ſuch giddy heads and muddy brains, as they muſt have, when they return from *maſquerades*, *cotteries*, and other ſuch like places of *dullneſs* and *ſtupefaction*. How can it be otherwiſe? When they eat when they ſhould ſleep, and reſt and lol in their coaches when they ſhould be about Buſineſs. But what renders the matter worſe, their natural vigour is exhauſted by living contrary to nature, that they are not able to bear the burden of government upon their ſhoulders. Their ſenſes turn languid,

---

Lord, which the Editors of the General Evening Poſt ſaid they did not think eligible to publiſh at large. As little is it judged eligible at preſent, to tranſlate this note. The ſubſtance of it is, however, pretty well diffuſed through the diſcourſe, and the Engliſh reader will ſuffer ſmall loſs for want of a tranſlation.

their

their ſpirits, torpid, and their minds ſtupid:----- and their whole frame liſtleſs to every thing, except a repetition of the very ſame things, which render them *unfit* for all the active employments of government. How wan are their complexions? how pale their cheeks! how languid ther looks? ----and gorey their eyes?----Solomon ſays, *Who have red eyes? thoſe that tarry long at the wine.*

Secondly, this woful practice diſorders the judgment, and inflames the imagination. When the organs of ſenſation are relaxed through intemperance, diſſipation and want of natural reſt, it is impoſſible that the judgment can be clear, or have that freeneſs of exerciſe that it would have, provided the ſoul had ſound organs to act in, and the animal functions were nouriſhed by wholeſome ſupplies of natural and ſeaſonable food and reſt.

This woful courſe of life alſo inflames the imagination, and puſhes on the whole man to irrational and forbidden gratifications.—Whatever is the cauſe, the effect is undeniable, that men under the power of intemperance will purſue objects that they would be aſhamed to approach, provided they were ſober and under the government of reaſon. The danger that ariſes to a nation when Princes eat in the morning is very great; for when their judgments are blinded and their imaginations inflamed, they are ready to purſue thoſe objects of deſire which fancy ſuggeſts, inſtead of thoſe which reaſon and judgment would dictate to ſober perſons, and ſo they either forget national concerns, to purſue their own fancy, or manage all public concerns according to imagination, and when whim contrary to reaſon and ſound judgment. It is not

to

to be ſuppoſed that their lordſhips who have gone to bed gorged with high ſeaſoned food and ſtrong drink at four o'clock in the morning, can be well qualified to judge of an expreſs from Paris, Madrid, or the Weſt Indies. For though they may be wiſer than other men, (which is even problematical) yet they are not naturally ſtronger, and muſt have reſt and ſleep as well as others. And it is plain that their wiſdom can be of little ſervice to the nation, when they are aſleep. It is true, they have ſecretaries that are intended to wait upon buſineſs in their abſence;—but wicked fame ſays, that they alſo eat in the morning, and ſleep as long as their maſters.

Thirdly, There is another woful thing that happens when Princes and Privy Counſellors eat in the morning, and that is, that it gives the world reaſon to infer, that the Sovereign, though he may be a man in point of age, is but a child in conduct, when he employs ſuch irregular and ſlothful ſervants to manage the buſineſs of the empire; for it ſeldom happens that the firſt and latter part of this wo are ſeparated. If Great Britain is at this day an exception, it will be an happy circumſtance; for by all accounts the caſe is different in other nations, where Kings, Princes, and Privy Gounſellors, purſue the ſame courſe. With regard to thoſe nations where there are no Kings, we can form no argument from them concerning the wiſe man's wo; the people in thoſe countries probably eat and ſleep all together.—But this muſt be accounted a part of their infelicity; for when a nation has miniſters of ſtate to watch for their intereſt, they may all ſleep as ſound and as long as they pleaſe.

When

When Princes eat in the morning there are the following woful things that generally happen to the community.

1. The manners of the nation are neglected, and a wide door opened for all ſorts of vice and immorality. The rulers of a nation are appointed not ſo much to collect the revenue, as to reſtrain vice and immorality and maintain good order.—Common Exciſe Officers may perform the firſt, but it requires perſons of genius, and true virtue to perform the latter. In reſtraining of vice, the moſt eaſy and the moſt eligible method for rulers, and magiſtrates to hold forth a good example to the people, and ſhew the inferior ranks of mankind, that virtue has ſome real meaning by practiſing it themſelves. It is amazing how the inferior degrees of mankind look up to thoſe above them, from the ſcullion in the kitchen to his Grace's waiting ſervant. It is no uncommon thing to find all the imitations of high life below ſtairs, as many of low life above. Men who would deſire to make their duties and influence, ſerve the good and advantage of ſociety, muſt beware of giving bad examples to thoſe whom they know are ready to form their conduct upon the patterns they give them. It will hardly be found in hiſtory, that the common people were wicked and diſſolute, when thoſe of high rank were virtuous. In the body politic as in the body natural, the moſt dangerous and deadly diſtempers proceed from the head. When the children of Iſrael rebelled againſt the Lord in the matter of Korah, they had *Princes* of the congregation for their leaders; and when they committed *whoredom* at *Shittim*, they had *Zimri the ſon of Salu, a Prince*

Prince of a chief houſe among the Simeonites, for a leader in this *filthy* and *abominable* practice.

When magiſtrates and rulers, who are ſuppoſed to be men of wiſdom and underſtanding, and better qualified to diſtinguiſh between good and evil than the vulgar, commit deeds unworthy of their characters, and contrary to moral laws, the common ranks of men are ready conclude that there is not much malignity in vice as they were wont to apprehend. They therefore are tempted to preſume in trying an imitation, and if charged with tranſgreſſing divine laws, have the excuſe ready, that they only, have done what his Lordſhip ſet them the example to do.

It will never be in the power of any ſtate to reſtrain vice by penal laws, without adding the force of example and wiſe tutorage. Vice and immorality are beſt prevented by good education, and wiſe example; and if rulers would have their ſubjects to obey laws, they ought to ſhew them by their example the propriety, and advantage of obeying them. It is the love of juſtice, that will make men dutiful and virtuous; the fear of puniſhment will make them ſervile but not honeſt.

If they can once overcome this fear; they will no longer pay any regard to duty.—And there are many ways of getting the better of *even* the fear of death itſelf, which in moſt ſtates is conſidered the higheſt puniſhment that the laws can inflict. Habits of vice and wickedneſs too often produce infidelity and temporary atheiſm, which make vicious men conſider death as only a deliverance from preſent pain and uneaſineſs.

Cæſar

Cæſar ſpoke the ſentiments of more than himſelf, when he ſaid, *that in ſorrow and wretchedneſs death is reſt from trouble, and not a puniſhment, and that it puts an end to all the evils of mankind.* (a) There is no manner of doubt but that many of thoſe criminals who ſuffer the puniſhment which the laws have adjudged for their crimes, firmly believe that there is no juſtice in theſe laws when they ſee themſelves dragged to execution for tranſgreſſions which others commit in an higher degree with impunity, and are alſo honoured and preferred for committing them. There are few ſo deſtitute of common ſenſe, as not to perceive that there is as much criminality in robbing a nation of millions, as plundering an individual of a few pounds or ſhillings, and that ſheding the blood of thouſands of innocent perſons, is as criminal as taking away the life of one man. How can rulers expect that the ſubjects will pay due regard to mercy, judgment and faith, when thoſe in the high departments of ſtate, and the exalted ſtations of life, commit thoſe vices for which they are moſt ſeverely puniſhed? Perſons who form the rule of their conduct from the examples of thoſe above them, and not from the laws themſelves, will never be perſwaded that they can juſtly deſerve puniſhment for doing what rulers themſelves have pointed out to them to do by their example.

It is folly of the moſt extravagant nature, and for which it is not eaſy to find a name, for le-

---

(a) In luctu atque miſeriis mortem ærumnarum requiem; non cruciatum eſſe; eam cuncta mortalium mala diſſolvere; ultra neque curæ neque gaudio locum eſſe. This no uncommon language among even ſome modern legiſlators who are ſaid like Solomon's princes to eat in the morning.

Cæſaris oratio pro Catalina.

gif-

giſlators to imagine, that any laws can be binding upon the conſciences of men that are not immediately founded in juſtice. Juſtice is one of thoſe cardinal virtues which the heathens declared to be ſelf-evident, and Cicero who perhaps was a greater man than any in the Britiſh ſenate, conſidered juſtice as a thing, concerning which there could be no doubt, or if any doubt aroſe the thing ought to be done. (a) What is not ſelf-evident in matters of right and wrong ought never to be done; and it can never be ſelf-evident that little criminals ſhould ſuffer, and great ones be preferred for their wickedneſs. No authority can ſanctify what is in its own nature wrong, nor oblige men to yield obedience to preceipts or laws which are contrary to ſtatutes, already confeſſed on all hands to be juſt and righteous.

When the King is a child and Princes eat in the morning, it is no uncommon thing to ſee thoſe muddy legiſlators exagerate modern ſtatutes, and enforce them by the ſevereſt ſanctions, which are diametrically oppoſite and contrary to ancient laws, and fundamental inſtitutions. Rulers cannot be ſuppoſed well qualified to make laws for others when they, under the immediate influence of intemperance, and their ſenſes and underſtandings annihilated, and in a real delerium. Princes and Miniſters of State, can but ill adviſe for the good of a nation, when they are led tottering from the bagnio to their palaces, and tumble into their couches in a ſtate of inſenſibility. Supported by ſuch *tot-*

(a) Quo circa bene præcipiunt. qui vetant quidquam agere, quod dubites æquum ſit an iniquum. Æquitas enim civet ipſa per ſe; dubitatio cogitationem inſignificat injuriæ.

ering pillars, it is no wonder the *ſtate ſtaggers*, and the *throne ſhakes*. Theſe men it is true have their apologies, but they are not new; Julius Cæſar, as baſe a man as ever diſgraced government, made the ſame apology more than ſeventeen hundred years ago,——intended to colour the actions of a ſet of men of a ſimilar character. "Men of inferior rank, ſays he, paſs "their days in obſcurity, and when they com- "mit any error through paſſion, few obſerve "it; their fortune and reputation are alike; "but thoſe who are employed in high offices "of the ſtate, their conduct is known by all "men, whence it comes to paſs, that men in "high ſtations, enjoy the ſmalleſt ſhare of li- "berty." (a)

This thread bare apology is not founded in truth; for there are many tranſactions of the greateſt conſequence and importance to the public that millions know nothing of. How few are acquainted with the revenue of the Secretary at War, or the emoluments of the Secretary of the Navy? Few people know or believe that the perquiſites of theſe offices amout to nearly as much money as the whole amount of the late new tax upon houſes. If the emoluments of the Secretary to the navy were 30,000 l. a year beſides the ſalary, in the days of Sir Harry Vane, which he conſcientiouſly gave up to the public, though he had a patent for life, what muſt theſe emoluments amount to now, when

(a) Qui demiſſi in obſcuram vitam habent, ſi quid iracundia delinquere, pauci ſciunt: fama atque fortuna pares ſunt; qui magna imperio præditi in excelſo ætatem agunt eorum facta cuncti mortales novere. Ita in maxuma fortuna, minima licentia eſt. Orati pro Catalina.

the

the expence of the Britiſh navy is more than ten times the extent that it was at that period. The ſecretary then had only four-pence the pound for the money audited, and now the rate is ſix-pence. The great financier as his friends call him, appears to be a mere child in the duties of his office, for he might have had more than his houſe tax, and poſt-horſe revenue juſt at his hand, and the bleſſings of the nation for taking of it; whereas all-ends of the earth where there are Engliſhmen, curſe him by night and by day. The reduction of theſe enormous ſums to the ſtandard of moderation would have anſwered the purpoſe of the tax upon houſes, which is ſo grievious to many poor families.

Secondly, When Princes eat in the morning, they devour more in gratifying their luſts and appetites, than would ſupply the exigencies of government, and greatly relieve the community. The all devouring paſſions of princes and courtiers waſte more treaſure, than the real neceſſity of the ſtate, and when they are of the character to which this *wo* relates, they generally waſte all in doing nothing. The largeſt ſums are not ſufficient to ſupply the vaſt deſires of their unbounded luſts; what would ſupport a peace eſtabliſhment, or even carry on a *juſt* and *neceſſary* war, is inſufficient to ſupply the inordinate demands of regal luxury, and miniſterial diſſipation. What things are neceſſary for the welfare of a ſtate, are not difficult to be obtained; the ſuperfluities of rulers require vaſt ſums; the univerſe itſelf is inſufficient to ſupply them. The fooliſh fopperies that are ſuppoſed neceſſary to ornament and dignify government, require larger ſums, than the neceſſary and ſubſtantial requiſites that ſupport its vitals and give energy

to

to its exertions. Even in time of war there is more expended upon ſplendour, than upon the requiſites really needful for carrying it on; and the expence of guns, ſwords, ammunition and proviſions are ſcarcely to be compared with the ſums waſted upon the ſuperfluities of general officers, the gains of contractors, the profits of officers of ſtate, and ſecret expences. There is even more money expended in preſſing of one man to ſerve in our navy, than would be ſufficient to enliſt three, under good management. But when Princes eat in the morning, their meaneſt dupes muſt imitate them, and nothing leſs can ſerve them than an expence, equivalent to the luſts of them all. Under the influence and direction of ſuch managers, it is not to be expected that a community can proſper either in peace or war. In peace the number of unneceſſary offices of ſtate require an expence equal to an ordinary war eſtabliſhment, and in time of war proviſion is not made ſo much to furniſh the army and navy with good men, good officers, and other things neceſſary for carrying it on, as to ſupply the friends of thoſe rulers that eat and drink in the morning, with all things that their appetites require.

It can be for no other reaſon that in ſome nations in Europe, a great number of half-pay officers, able and willing to ſerve their country and King, are refuſed, and not called to duty in the time of danger;—when boys and ſtriplings, ignorant of military ſervice, are placed at the head of regiments and companies, for the ſake of emolument, that in the time of peace, they may riot on the vitals of their country, and idly ſpend what they never merited. The honour and ſafety of the nation is not ſo much the ſtudy of depraved and diſſipated men, as the gratification

of

of their own appetites, and the ſupport of thoſe that will miniſter to their pride and ambition. They endeavour to ſupport the laſt for the ſake of the firſt. Inſtances of this kind are frequently to be met with in ſome parts of the world, where men who are pliable to the will of a miniſter, though unqualified to ſerve in their profeſſion, are preferred to others poſſeſſed of the moſt conſumate and finiſhed accompliſhments. This ſhews that the honour and happineſs of the nation are not the chief ſtudy, nor the real end which they have in view in their adminiſtration, otherwiſe they would prefer the wiſeſt and beſt men to promote the welfare of their country.

When the luſts and appetites of Princes become maſters of their underſtanding, they alſo affect their hearts, and render them callous to virtue and common weal; they feel the force of no objects, ſo much as thoſe that ſupply the immediate craving of appetites, or that ſtand in the way of their gratification. Their whole deſire is bent towards the one, and their averſion againſt the other. It was a principle of this ſort that inclined the Son of Solomon to reject the counſel of the old men, that were his father's counſellors, and embrace the counſel of the young men that had been brought up with himſelf, and it is abundantly evident, that they gave that prince the advice which he followed, becauſe they knew his paſſions and their own inclined after the ſame objects. It is manifeſt that the good of the common weal was neither the ſtudy of the King nor his miniſters. Solomon had his own ſon in view when he uttered theſe words, *Wo to thee, O land, when thy King is a Child! and thy Princes eat in the morning.*

It is very remarkable that diſſipation and tyranny have

have in all ages kept pace with one another, and that when princes were of the complexion referred to by the wiſe man, they were always oppreſſive and arbitrary. This obſervation has held good from the age before the flood until this day, and there is no reaſon to expect that ever the charm will be broken. One immorality will always make way for another. One reaſon why profligacy produces tyranny is, that men create new deſires, by corrupting their natural appetites, and from this corruption there flows ſuch a vaſt generation, that the world itſelf is not able to ſupply them. From hence it comes to paſs that men are never ſatisfied with what they have, but graſp at more, and when their own cannot ſerve them, they covet what belongs to others.—And ſuch is the nature of this propenſity, that if they cannot obtain what they deſire freely, provided they have power, they will take it by force.

There is great danger in all indulgence; what is not agreeable at firſt, will by indulgence become neceſſary; and uſe, and frequent repetition, will make even the moſt diſagreeable things become neceſſary, and familiar. The nearer men approach to nature, their appetites will be the fewer, and thoſe they have more eaſily ſatisfied; indulge the natural ones, beyond meaſure, and they will create more new deſires than the world can ſatisfy. Would Kings and Princes eat and drink, and behave as they ſhould do, little would ſerve them, and their ſubjects would never be oppreſſed.—But after they have been accuſtomed to ſo much indulgence, and have had ſuch large revenues at their command, it would be a wonder of an uncommon nature, if their deſires did not encreaſe with their abundance. There is no way to make them virtuous, and temperate, but to reduce them

to the ſtandard of moderation, and make them return to virtue by the ſame path that they proceeded to *ambition*, *tyranny*, and *dominion*.

It was obſerved that tyranny and diſſipation have always kept pace together; but it muſt be always remembered alſo, that the latter is the parent of the former.

The Roman hiſtorian has in the pureſt and moſt elegant language, elucidated this obſervation in the character of the Romans. "After Carthage, the Rival of Rome was ſubdued, and riches flowed in by ſea and land, "the good fortune of that people almoſt ruined them, and thoſe who were capable of enduring the greateſt hardſhips with eaſe, were "unable to behave well when they grew rich. "The love of money produced the love of "power, theſe were the materials of all the reſt "of their evils. Covetouſneſs ſubverted faith "and probity, and other virtues. To indulge "theſe they gratified pride and cruelty, and "turned infidel and venal. Ambition made them "falſe, and made them ſay one thing and think "another. They eſtimated friendſhip and enmity, not according to their nature, but according "to what advantage might ariſe from them. They "put a good face upon the worſt deſigns. He "adds, after honour and riches were united, "glory, power and dominion attended them, virtue grew obſolete, and poverty became a reproach. Integrity was accounted ill-nature. "Luxury, avarice and pride ſprung from riches "and corrupted the young men, in conſequence "of which they profuſely waſted what was "their own, and coveted what belonged to others.

"They

" They paid no regard to modeſty, chaſtity, ho-
" neſty or religion." (a) The Romans loſt their liberty, and fell under tyranny, firſt by diſſipation, and the ſame fate will happen to all nations that become diſſipated in the ſame manner. The Aſiyrians, Medes and Perſians proceeded in the ſame manner before the Romans, and ingrafted tyranny and ſlavery on luxury and diſſipation. The conſequence was, this rotten principle corrupted all the ſprings of government, and the whole fabric mouldered into duſt.

Thirdly, They will not regard nor liſten to the complaints and grievances of the people. They are ſo intent upon purſuing the objects of their pride and ambition, that they conſider all complaints of the ſubjects, as unreaſonable clamour factiouſly intended to interrupt their pleaſures and gratifications. In all corrupt ſtates the rulers

---

(a) Cathaga Æmula imperii Romani, ab ſtirpe interiit, cuncta maria patebant, ſævire fortuna ac miſcere omnia cæpit, tui labores, pericula, dubias atque aſperas res facile toleraverant, iis olium divitiæ, optandæ aliis oneri miſeriæque furere. Igitur primo pecuniæ dinde imperii cupido creviti ea quaſi materies omnum malorum fuero namque avaritia fidem probitatem, cæteraſque artis bonas ſubvertit ; pro his ſubperbiam, crudelitatem, deos negligore, omnia venalia habere edocuit, ambitio multos mortalis falſos fieri ſubegit ; aliud clauſum in pectore, aliud in lingua promptum habere ; amicitias inimiciliaſque non ex re ſed ex commodo æſtumar ; magiſque vultum quam ingenium bonum habere, poſtquam divitiæ honori eſſe cæpere, & eas gloria imperia potentia equebatur ; hebeſcere virtus, paupertas probro haberi, innocentia pro malivolentia duci cæpit. Igitur ex divitiis juventutem luxuria atque avaratia cum ſuperbia, invaſere ; rapere, conſumere ; ſua parvi pendere, aliena cuperer podorem pudiciliam divina atque humana promiſcua, nihil penſi atque moderati habere.-----Lubido ſtupri, Ganeæ cæterique cultus non minor inceperat.

ge-

generally conſider the complaints of the people as unreaſonable;—and the true reaſon and cauſe of this is, that through habits of vice and diſſipation, their own reaſon is ſo depraved, that they are like thoſe rulers mentioned by the prophet, that called good evil and evil good, put light for darkneſs and darkneſs for light. (a) Reaſon ſpeaks the ſame language in all men, but falſe reaſoning differs much from reaſon,—as much as a ſhadow differs from the ſubſtance. Reaſon, and ſelf-evident truth are the ſame, and all men can perceive it, unleſs blinded by prejudice, or when they wilfully ſhut their eyes through corruption. The human mind has its diſeaſes as well as the body, which make it perceive objects in an unnatural light. The lower ranks of men as they generally follow nature more nearly than thoſe in high life ſeldom behave ſo unreaſonably as thoſe who call themſelves their ſuperiors; and with regard to objects of common ſenſe, they are full better judges than the others.

They will ſmile at a man that will tell them there is no heat in fire, nor ſmell in a roſe, and if he inſiſt upon it they will account him mad, and give over reaſoning with him. And ſhould any tell them that they are not judges of their own rights and privileges, when they have plain ſtatutes by which they determined, they conſider them as ill deſigning perſons who wanted to impoſe on them. They would be ready to tell them, and not without reaſon, that if there were any thing in government which they were incapable of un-

(a) Iſaiah, v. 20.

derſtanding, that they were alſo incapable of yielding to it, becauſe obedience depends upon knowledge of right, and cannot exiſt without it.

When rulers are intoxicated with ideas of power, and have their paſſions inflamed with diſſipation, they are ready to imagine that the whole community are as fooliſh as themſelves; and for that reaſon endeavour to perſuade the people that it is faction to oppoſe their meaſures, and treaſon to maintain their own rights.

Becauſe they will not miniſter to the gratification of the luſts and appetites of thoſe who want to enſlave them, they are called factious and rebellious. It is impoſſible that reaſon can demand, that government which was inſtituted for the good of ſociety, ſhould be made the greateſt evil and the heavieſt curſe. It could never be the intent of the appointment of government, that rulers ſhould have a right to diſpoſe of more than belonged to the right adminiſtration thereof. With regard to oſtentatious ſplendor, it adds nothing to the dignity of government as a moral inſtitution; for their is more true dignity in a magiſtrate executing juſt laws in the home ſpun manufacture of his own country, than in one ſupporting unrighteous decrees, and arbitrary authority, dreſſed in ermine, or trimmed in gold.

Mankind are not in general ſo ignorant, as to ſuppoſe that pageantry and ſuperfluity, add dignity to government, and they can perceive either the fool or the villain throngh all the garniſhing

niſhing and trappings of office. Neither the ſtar nor the garter are ſo far able to dazzle their eyes, as to hinder them from perceiving the black ſpots that are underneath them, or, of diſcerning the the wolf in ſheeps cloathing. Rulers fondly imagine that the people are not qualified to diſcern the injuſtice of refuſing their reaſonable requeſts, and for that reaſon ſport themſelves with their petitions and remonſtrances; but in this they diſplay more their own want of judgment than the people do want of ſenſe and underſtanding.

It is ſomewhat ſtrange, that princes have not learned from experience and obſervation, that all unneceſſary expence and ſplendour in government are only prognoſtications of the downfall of ſtates and forerunners of their ruin. The hiſtory of the four great monarchies, may ſerve to inſtruct all future generations of the folly of pageantry, and the unneceſſary expence in the government of nations. Luxury and diſſipation has generally produced a deſire of dominion, and made princes neglect paying a juſt regard to the complaints and grievances of their ſubjects; for they have been for the moſt part, fondeſt of dominion when they were leaſt fit to govern, and near to their downfall.

It is undoubtedly a woful thing to a nation, to be obliged to ſupply the extravagances of men, who inſtead of ruling it with wiſdom and juſtice, ſpend the ſubſtance thereof in all the vile arts of corruption and licentiouſneſs. And what adds to this wo is, that they charge the people with being licentious, after they have taken

taken all the pains in their power to make them ſo.

Yet bad as the people in general may be, they would ſhudder, at the thoughts of many acts of wickedneſs that are committed by their ſuperiors. The charge of licentiouſneſs comes with an ill grace from thoſe who are living conſtantly in the tranſgreſſion of both divine and human laws, and have nothing to ſave them from puniſhment, except the partiality of government, and the indulgence of divine mercy.

With regard to the charge of faction and rebellion which arbitrary rulers bring againſt the people, it may be returned upon themſelves, where theſe crimes are oftener to be found than among the people. It muſt proceed from their not knowing what is the nature of rebellion, that they do not take charge home to themſelves.

The prophet Iſaiah will help them to underſtand what is properly rebellion. Thy princes are rebellious and the companions of thieves, every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards, they judge not the fatherleſs, neither does the cauſe of the widow come before them.

(a) From this deſcription it is plain that princes may be rebellious, and that when they are the com-

(a) Iſa. 1. 25,

panions

panions of theives they come under that predicament.

There are three things that conſtitute rebellion according to this deſcription.

(1) Joining intereſts and partnerſhip with theives and diſhoneſt perſons. Theſe are ſuch as take what is not their own, and apply it to their own purpoſes. This is a courſe compliment to princes, but as it is given by an inſpired prophet it cannot be taken amiſs.

His rebellion againſt God and the laws, for rulers to take more than juſtly is due to them or join intereſts with thoſe who do ſo.

It is alſo diſhoneſt to promote or procure laws, that may make it legal to give them more than the people can afford; this comes under the notion of theft and rebellion according to the prophet's idea.

The princes of Judah and Iſrael went partners with the ſovereign in the plunder of the nation. They probably voted large ſupplies to the King, becauſe they knew they would receive a ſhare of the revenue, and might promote a law for encreaſing the civil liſt in hopes of ſerving in his Majeſty's houſhold; but this was theft and rebellion againſt juſtice, and the laws of the land.

Thoſe

Thoſe who obey the fundamental laws of government cannot be rebels, though it is manifeſt that legiſlators that make laws contrary to natural juſtice and the law of God may be guilty of rebellion.

2. Seeking after gifts, and following rewards are joined with rebellion. This probably referred to a vote of credit, which adminiſtration of Judah procured to anſwer the expence of ſecret ſervice, without any deſign of doing any thing with it for the good of the nation. This is joined with theft and rebellion.

And indeed what can be greater theft than to procure the credit of a nation to raiſe money for the ſervice thereof, and apply it to private purpoſes? Were ſuch a thing done in Britain, the whole nation would have reaſon to cry out againſt it.

(3.) Not executing the laws impartially is joined with rebellion, or is rather a part of it. The fatherleſs and the widow were either neglected or made feel all the force of penal laws when they were guilty, when thoſe who had influence in a tribe or could ſerve the ends of adminiſtration were reſcued from juſtice, when they had committed the moſt capital crimes.

This is by the prophet accounted the very height

height of rebellion, and is often committed by princes and their companions.

Thus it is plain, that rebellion is not a crime peculiar to the people only, but is alſo ſometimes to be found at the very ſprings of government.

Some would make us believe that kings and princes cannot be guilty of rebellion, but the ſcripture informs us otherwiſe.

As we are certain from the beſt authority that even princes may rebel, the queſtion now is, whether they ought to be puniſhed for it like other rebels, and who can lawfully puniſh them? This queſtion requires a little caution, and muſt be determined by ſcripture; and it is hoped then that no Chriſtians will diſſent from the concluſion.

Whether there is any difference between trying Kings and Princes for rebellion, and puniſhing them without trying them, I ſhall leave to the tories, and caſuiſts to determine. For there has been more noiſe concerning the trial of King Charles the Firſt, than concerning the puniſhment of all the rebellious Princes ſince the conqueſt.

This Prince is the only Martyr we find among the Kings of England, though many of them

them have ſuffered for their tyranny and rebellion againſt the laws.

The Kings in this country are conſidered as the ſource of the laws, and it is ſuppoſed that if the King could die, that all law would be at an end; for this reaſon the lawyers have made our Kings immortal, and laid it down as a firſt principle that the King cannot die.

It ought to have been ſeriouſly conſidered before ſuch a myſterious maxim had been laid down as a firſt principle, whether laws or kings were firſt appointed by the Almighty; for if ever we can find laws without Kings, it will appear manifeſt that they are not neceſſary to the being of government, but that laws may continue when there is no monarch.

It is plain, that there was law before we hear any thing of any ruler except God himſelf, from whence it would appear, that the exiſtence of laws does not depend upon any human regal authority, and though that Kings ſhould chance to die, the laws if juſt will continue immortal; if they are unjuſt they ought never to exiſt.

But to make this point as plain as poſſible, it muſt be conſidered that all government orginally proceeded from God; and this rule of government is expreſſed two ways by the law of nature, and expreſs and poſitive precepts in the divine word, theſe are the two ways by which God ſpeaks to men concerning government. The execution of this civil government is left to the wiſdom of ſociety to form.

it in what ſhape men pleaſe, provided they do not proceed contrary to nature or divine poſitive laws. All men are ſuppoſed capable of keeping or tranſgreſſing the laws, from whence ariſes rewards and puniſhments. But there is no infallible legiſlator except the Deity; it is he only that can do no wrong. No human authority can raiſe an individual in ſociety above the laws, or render that individual free from the penalty of them in caſe of tranſgreſſion. That a king has no peers, and conſequently cannot be tried by his ſubjects, is a maxim of human invention; for as he is only a ſervant in truſt, if he betray or abuſe his truſt, though he may not have peers, he has undoubtedly ſuperiors, to whom he is accountable in juſtice. The whole community are his ſuperiors, though individuals are his ſubjects, when he obſerves the laws. When his ſuperiors diveſt him of his truſt for abuſing it, he becomes then only equal to other individuals, and conſequently is *par communitatis*, a peer of the community, and liable to the ſanction of the laws like others. That community which ſet up one man to execute the laws, may appoint others to judge him for fundamentally deſtroying the end of his appointment. If God had created kings before ſubjects, or ſignified that mankind were made for their behoof, and bound to be ſufficient to them under all conſiderations; in this caſe a monarch could have had no peers, but would have been as abſolute over men, as Adam was over the beaſts. But there is no account of this doctrine in ſcripture, and reaſon can never ſuppoſe it.

That monarchs have been called to account by the people for proſtitution of government, with divine approbation, the hiſtory of the ſon of Solomon, and of Amaziah, kings of Judah, are ſufficient proof. The ſtory of the firſt is recorded

1 Kings xii, and of the latter, 2 Chron. xxv. The crime of the firſt was his refuſing to liſten to the humble petition of his ſubjects, when they requeſted to be eaſed of the heavy burdens they groaned under; and the crime of the latter was, his corrupting religion and entering into an unjuſt war with the king of Iſrael, in which he loſt a vaſt number of his ſubjects, and reduced the nation to great diſtreſs. The hiſtory of theſe two princes ſhews plainly what people may do without diſpleaſing, or rather what power he has lodged in their hands.

It is a vulgar proverb, that ſome people are twice children; this is ſometimes the lot of kings, and was the caſe of the ſon of Solomon, the ſon of David. This prince was forty and one years old when he came to the kingdom, and was a child of a pretty competent age; but notwithſtanding his number of years, his folly ſhewed him to be but a child. It will be neceſſary to illuſtrate this prince's childhood in a few particulars.

I. He obſtinately refuſed to redreſs the grievances of his people, and threatened to encreaſe them. Though money was plenty in the days of Solomon, the people were poor; gold and ſilver were plenty in Jeruſalem, and near the king's court, but it does not ſeem to have circulated as far as Shechem, and the extremities of Palaſtine. The real wealth of nations does not conſiſt in a large quantity of ſpecie, but in a proper balance of the value of money with the price of uſeful commodities. Solomon was rich, but his ſubjects were poor and oppreſſed. The misfortune of Solomon's government, for all the wiſdom that he had, was, that he brought more luxuries into the nation, than commodities profitable for the ſervice of the people. He was alſo very extravagant in his houſhold expences, and the

charges

charges of his government. "His proviſion for one "day was thirty meaſures of fine flour, and three-"ſcore meaſures of meal; ten fat oxen, and twenty "oxen out of the paſture, and an hundred ſheep, "beſide harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and "fatted fowl. He had alſo forty thouſand ſtalls "for horſes, for chariots, and twelve thouſand horſe-"men." (a) This was a monſtrous peace eſtabliſhment. What a dreadful expence muſt this have been to the nation? Under all this ſhew of wealth and ſplendour in the king, the people were poor and greatly oppreſſed. They therefore came to the new king, to aſk a redreſs of their grievances, and to have their burdens made lighter. But he anſwered them roughly and would not liſten to their humble petition. *They ſpake unto him, ſaying, Thy father made our yoke grievous; now therefore make thou the grievous ſervice of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will ſerve thee.* (b) There was nothing unreaſonable in all this; it was a very modeſt requeſt, and none except a *child* or a *fool* would have refuſed it. Solomon ſeems to have had ſome ſuſpicion of his ſon before he died; for he ſays, *he hated all his labour, becauſe he was to leave it to the man that came after him, and he knew not whether he would be a wiſe man or a fool.* (c) What his father was afraid of he now ſhewed publicly, in refuſing the requeſt of his people, who promiſed willingly to ſerve him, provided he would enable them to do it when it was in his power. Could any thing be more childiſh than to continue an expenſive government, and an enormous civil liſt, when all ranks of perſons were groaning under burdens, and complaining of oppreſſion? The complaints of the people are not to be trifled with; for if princes will not relieve them, they will them-

(a) 1 Kings iv. 28. (b) 1 Kings xii. 4. (c) Eccl. ii. 19.

 ſelve

ſelves, and the Almighty will help them to do it. It was a moſt childiſh action in that weak prince to refuſe ſuch a reaſonable petition, which was altogether for his own intereſt to grant; for the people promiſed to ſerve him if he would eaſe them a little; ſo he might have ſaved all by little condeſcenſion, which he loſt through willfulneſs and obſtinacy. What can princes imagine the people are made of, when they treat them ſo ridiculouſly? They muſt ſurely think that they are not creatures of like paſſions with themſelves, otherwiſe they would ſoon conclude that they would not ſuffer the treatment which they often gave them.

II. This prince refuſed the advice of his father's aged and wiſe counſellors. *They ſpake unto him, ſaying, if thou wilt be a ſervant to this people, and wilt ſerve them, then will they be thy ſervants for ever.*(a) They deſerved every one a penſion for this advice; but ſuch words of wiſdom ſeldom meet with acceptance or preferment from childiſh princes. Theſe old ſages knew the office and duty of a king. It is only that of a *public ſervant* to the community, by fulfilling of which, they ſecure the love and obedience of their ſubjects for ever, which is the beſt ſecurity. This wiſe counſel did did not ſuit the humour of this *fooliſh* and *childiſh* prince. The word *ſervant* ſounded harſh in his deſpotic ears—A king to be a ſervant! How uncourtly the thought! how unroyal the idea! Theſe counſellors could not expect to continue long in his majeſty's ſervice; they were far too honeſt and free in their advice, to ſuit the cabinet of a *childiſh* and *obſtinate* ſovereign. They, however, diſcharged their duty, and gave the beſt proofs of their regard and love to their prince and their

(a) 1 Kings xii. 7.

country.

country. Theſe old men knew the ſtate of the nation, and were well perſuaded that the people would not long ſuffer the oppreſſions they were groaning under; they underſtood that many things had been now warped into government that were contrary to the conſtitution of the kingdom. The law ſaid, *that the king ſhould not multiply horſes, nor make the people return to Egypt for that purpoſe, neither was he to multiply to himſelf ſilver and gold.* (a) Solomon had tranſgreſſed in all theſe reſpects, and more than all, he had been guilty of Idolatry, and had not walked in the ſtatutes of God, like David his father. Theſe were all flagrant breaches of the conſtitution, which the old men knew were unwarrantable, and that the Lord would not ſuffer to paſs unpuniſhed if they were perſiſted in. They alſo knew that the people's claims were juſt and reaſonable, and ought to have been complied with, and for theſe reaſons gave him wholeſome counſel, which a wiſe prince would have received with thankfulneſs, and rewarded with honour. But this childiſh prince was fonder of the gewgaws of majeſty and ſtate, than the dignity of real government; and chooſe rather to imitate the *ſins* and *follies* of his father's reign, than covet his wiſdom, wherein he was worthy of imitation.

Nothing could be more fooliſh and weak, than to violate the fundamental laws of government. It was a fundamental law of the land, that the king ſhould not have his heart lifted up above his brethren; for if this ſhould happen, he nor his children were to prolong their days in the kingdom. Yet this he regarded nothing, but for the ſake of unjuſt dominion, loſt the ten parts out of twelve of his whole dominions.

(a) Deut. xvii. 16. 17.

III. It

III. It was childiſh, to turn away men of age and experience, and to chooſe young counſellors who knew but little, and were on that account more ready to be raſh and headſtrong. He however adviſed with the young men that had grown up with himſelf, who gave him counſel according to his own inclination. Perhaps ſome of them had been his *tutors*, and had taught him thoſe principles of government, which they wiſhed to ſee put in practice, now when he was come to the throne. Their principles are manifeſt from the advice which they gave their ſovereign. *And they ſaid unto him, thus ſhalt thou ſpeak unto this people that ſpake unto thee ſaying, thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us: thus ſhalt thou ſay unto them, my little finger ſhall be heavier than my father's loins, and now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke, my father did chaſtiſe you with whips, but I will chaſtiſe you with ſcorpions.** This ſpeech like many other ſpeeches that are made for kings, this childiſh prince was ſo fooliſh as to deliver to the people, which made them change their petition into a remonſtrance, which he did not ſoon forget. *The people anſwered the king and ſaid, what portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the ſon of Jeſſe: to your tents, O Iſrael! now ſee to thine own houſe David.* It is the greateſt folly in the world for kings to drive their ſubjects to deſpair; there is none can tell what a people will do when once they are awakened. All families are alike to them when their own natural rights and privileges are come in competition.

Whatever reaſons Rehoboam might give for preferring theſe raſh counſellors inſtead of the old ſages who give ſalutary advice, they certainly had their

(a) 1 King xii. 10.

foundation

foundation in weakneſs and childiſhneſs. He might probably alledge that he had a right to chooſe his own ſervants and prefer his particular friends; this is a common argument with ſovereigns, when they are challenged on this head. But they ought to conſider, that the government of a nation is very different from the government of an houſhold, or the management of domeſtic affairs. Though a king has a right to chooſe his own ſervants, yet theſe ſervants have no right to ruin a whole nation to pleaſe one man. A prince may appoint whom he pleaſes to manage the affairs of his own houſe without conſulting the nation concerning his conduct; but what relates to the public is quite different; the ſovereign and all his ſervants, are accountable to the community for the management of public affairs; for there can be no authority with uncontroulable power to ruin mankind, lodged in any department of ſociety.

IV. It was a childiſh action in the ſon of Solomon, after the ten tribes had declared themſelves independent, to employ a man to bring about a reconciliation who had had a chief hand in driving them to a revolt. *Then king Rehoboam ſent Adoram, who was over the tribute, and all Iſrael ſtoned him with ſtones till he died.** Many differences might eaſily be made up, provided wiſe men were employed in the buſineſs; but when a difference is fomented by folly, it will never be in the power of fools to remedy it. Had ſome of the men, who gave the king the wiſe counſel, been employed in the buſineſs, it is probable it might have ſucceeded; their words would have weight with the people; but to employ the very Judas that kept the bag that ſwallowed the treaſure of the nation, was the moſt childiſh ſcheme that

(a) 1 King xii. Verſe 18.

could

could have been deviſed. Their very blood began to boil at the ſight of him, and they gave him juſtice in a ſummary manner. His maſter was much to blame in employing him, and ſhewed himſelf a mere child in the knowledge of mankind, as well as totally deficient of all powers to govern a kingdom. It was a ſad affair for a firſt lord of the treaſury to be pelted to death with ſtones like a dog; he deſerved perhaps all he met with, but it was a butcherly way of putting him to death. Not to give a poor ſinner time to ſay Lord have mercy on him was a dreadful affair. But what can ſuch men expect when the people are ſo terribly provoked with their wicked and oppreſſive meaſures. Had he been beheaded it would have come much to the ſame thing; for it was his life they wanted, and either way would have anſwered the purpoſe. The greateſt folly was in ſending him upon ſuch a commiſſion, where there was not the ſmalleſt probability that ever he would ſucceed. It was as improbable that Adoram could bring about a reconciliation between Judah and the ten tribes, as it was that our commiſſioners could have effected one between Great Britain and the colonies. It would have required wiſe men, and good men, to have performed a work of this kind. It was out of the power of penſioners, or friends of the court of either kings to do it.

What aggravated the childiſhneſs of this king was, that after his fooliſh ſcheme of involuntary reconciliation was fruſtrated, he determined to take vengeance on the revolted tribes, by levying war upon them, and intended to have added blood-ſhed to oppreſſion. After he came to Jeruſalem, he aſſembled all the houſe of Judah and Benjamin, an hundred and fourſcore thouſand choſen men which were warriors, to bring back the kingdom to Rehoboam the ſon of Solomon. They were no doubt all good men and

true

true to the cauſe of their maſter; perſons of warlike intrepidity, mighty men of valour, men of known character in martial exploits. There is no doubt but ſome of them might have been in the armies of king David, and had been at the ſacking of ſeveral cities, and vanquiſhed many armies. They would therefore account it an eaſy matter to ſubdue a rebellious rabble of traiterous revolters, untrained to war, and at preſent under no diſcipline. The young men, whoſe counſels had cauſed the revolt, would be ready to ſupport their own meaſures, and to perſuade his majeſty, that it was impoſſible to reſiſt his arms; that a mean rebellious mob, would never ſtand before the king's regular troops, but would flee or lay down their arms at the ſight of his ſtandard. Kings in the *ſecond infancy* of their nature, are willing to believe ſuch flattering ſtories, eſpecially when their hearts are bent upon a project to which they relate. And had not the Almighty interpoſed his authority, this child of a king would have tried an experiment that might have coſt him the whole of his dominions and his life into the bargain. The only thing that is wonderful in his whole character is, that he ſhould have paid any regard to the divine authority, or have liſtened to the prophet that was ſent to him. One would have thought that he would have appointed a faſt, and tried what influence he had with heaven, and prayed for *ſtrength to reſiſt* the rebellious tribes. Child as he was, he kept clear of this folly, and kept what he had, rather than riſk all, by inſulting the Deity. In our times the words of the prophets paſs for wind; for though they ſpeak as plainly now as in thoſe days, their words are not regarded, but are conſidered as old prognoſtications, whoſe times are elapſed, and themſelves out of date. Thus in the character of the ſon of Solomon we have a mirror, in which we may ſee the complexion of the ſe-

cond infancy of princes, and the childhood of kings; we may alſo perceive how woeful a thing it is to a nation to be governed by a weak and obſtinate prince, and how thankful we in theſe lands ſhould be that it is not our lot to fall under this diſmal woe.—But I conclude.

SER-

SERMON II.

Iſaiah lviii. 4, 6. *Behold ye faſt for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs. Is not this the faſt that I have choſen? to looſe the bands of wickedneſs, to undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every yoke.*

THERE is a vaſt of mimickry in ſome people's religion; it would be happy for them if they had more ſincerity and leſs ſplendor. Above all things it is the moſt abſurd to act a face before God; for there is neither praiſe nor profit can attend it, and there is a ſad account to be given for the part that is acted. It is a great pity but ſuch actors were hiſſed off the ſtage now, as they will be when the grand drama is finiſhed, and the curtains withdrawn. Faſting is an act of mortification which but few great men are acquainted with; and it is much to be queſtioned if our two metropolitans know much about it. Some of the curates would be better qualified to compoſe a form of prayer for a faſt day; men who are accuſtomed to devour many thouſands a year, know but little concerning faſting. Many of the inferior clergy know from experience the nature of this appointment, and are acquainted with the practical part of the duty; the form of prayer ſhould have been aſſigned to them to compoſe. The biſhops, deans, prebendaries, and rectors, ought to have been excuſed till ſome remarkable feſtivity was neceſſary, and then they would have been the moſt proper maſters of the ceremonies. Faſting is a very ſerious affair, and requires a very mortified temper

of

of mind. And what is more, it muſt be neither more nor leſs than what the Lord hath choſen. There is ſomething whimſical in a man driving in a coach to the houſe of God, and faſting only the time of divine ſervice, and galloping home to turtle and good wine in the afternoon. Faſting is now become a comedy, intended as a prologue, to tragedy, wherein men endeavour to pleaſe God with a farce, that he may give them aſſiſtance, to pleaſe themſelves with ſhedding human blood in acting the deepeſt tragedy. The repetition of our modern national faſting is neither more nor leſs, than the challenge which the Jews gave the Almighty in the third verſe of this chapter; *wherefore have we faſted and thou ſeeſt it not?* Wherefore haſt thou not, O Lord, ſuffered us to kill all the coloniſts five years ago? we faſted thrice before for this purpoſe, and thou regarded it not. We think it very ſtrange that thou haſt not permitted us to ſwallow up and devour theſe rebels, according to our requeſts which we devotely offered up theſe three times.

The Almighty gives his reaſons why he did not regard the faſting of the Jews, and it may ſerve as a reaſon why he has not regarded our national faſting. *Ye faſt for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs.* This is a faſt which the Lord has not choſen, and to which he will pay no merciful regard. I ſhall very ſhortly conſider a faſt which the Lord hath choſen:

I. It conſiſts in looſing the bands of wickedneſs; in repealing the ſanguinary laws that have been made to oppreſs and kill our brethren in America. They may perhaps be rebels, but what are we? or what were we when Chriſt died for the ungodly? It is well known that there were no laws in exiſtence that could make them rebels a few years ago; they

were only created ſuch, by the modern omnipotence of parliament. And can we imagine that a merciful and gracious God will regulate his conduct, according to the pleaſure of men who are more regulated by private intereſt and ambition, than juſtice and faith?

By bands of wickedneſs the prophet underſtands unrighteous decrees made by modern authority, contrary to ancient conſtitutional laws of the Jewiſh nation, given to Iſrael by the hand of Moſes. The laws which God gave to the Jews upon mount Horeb, ſecured the juſt rights and privileges of all ranks, and no authority of any judge or judges, ſanhedrim or council, could lawfully incroach upon a ſingle privilege of the meaneſt of the people. In the progreſs of time things were altered, and manners, meaſures, and laws were changed; for though the ancient code of laws, and rules of government which God had given them by Moſes, were ſtill the profeſſed ſtatutes of the nation, and went by the name of the conſtitutional laws of the realm, yet thoſe ſtatutes were perverted by modern acts of power which were diametrically oppoſite thereto, and determined by the government to have as much force as the ancient inſtitutions of Moſes. The Jews were at this time much in the ſame ſituation that the people of this iſland are in at this day; they boaſted of their privileges, while they perverted them; and when they made uſe of power to oppreſs, they produced laws for ſo doing. The rulers had made their government a jarring ſyſtem of oppoſite principles. *Non bene junctarum diſcordia ſemina rerum.* The modern acts of the legiſlature, were contrary to the conſtitution, but were at the ſame time inforced with as powerful ſanctions, and executed with more rigour. While mercy, judgment and faith lay neglected, ſtatutes of oppreſſion

oppreſſion were inforced with all the energy that government was capable of. Swearing, lying, and committing adultery were winked at, while the laws concerning tythes were rigorouſly executed. A man might defile his neighbour's bed, ſeduce his daughter with impunity, but if he failed in paying tythes or of bearing his ſhare of taxes he was moſt rigourouſly proſecuted.

Hoſea, who lived at the time with the Prophet Iſaiah, informs us how relaxed this people were in points of juſtice and morality, even when they were rigorous in things of very ſmall conſequence.— "They make the King glad with their wickedneſs, "and the Princes with their lies. They are all adul- "terers, as an oven over-heated by the baker. (a) "By ſwearing and lying, and killing and ſtealing, "and committing adultery, they break out, and "blood toucheth blood. Hear, I pray you, O "heads of Jacob, and ye princes of Iſrael; is it not "your office to know judgment, who hate the good, "and love the evil? who pluck off the ſkin from "off their bones; who alſo eat the fleſh of my peo- "ple, and flay the ſkin from off them". (b) This people, at this very time, pretended to obſerve the the laws of Moſes, though they were guilty of the moſt violent oppreſſion and injuſtice. They were partial in the law; that is, they paid more regard to the new acts of State, than the Old Statutes of the Conſtitution which were appointed by the Almighty. This appears to be our caſe at preſent. A man will be proſecuted with rigour for killing a hare, or ſuffering a dog to follow him, when he will be permitted to tranſgreſs the moral law with impunity. I appeal to our Magiſtrates, whether they are as zealous in putting the laws in execution againſt open

(a) Hoſea vii. 5. iv. 2. (b) Micah iii. 1.

profaners

profaners of the Sabbath day, as they are in executing them againſt poachers, and perſons that are not judged qualified to kill a hare or a partridge? The ſtatutes which are againſt immorality, and vice, are ſtanding in our law books, as ſo many dead acts, while modern ſtatutes, and unconſtitutional decrees, are quickened with the utmoſt energy of power, and executed with the iron hand of rigour. Is the ſame regard paid to Magna Charta, the Petition of Rights, the Bill of Rights, and the Union Settlement between the two nations, that is paid to the Boſton Port Bill, the Reſtraining Act, and the Canada Popiſh law? If our ancient ſtatutes are founded in juſtice, theſe modern laws are undoubtedly ſubverſive both of juſtice and equity. No man can prove that both are righteous decrees, unleſs he can prove contradictions to be true, and things oppoſite in their nature to be the ſame. Such inconſiſtent ſtatutes are by this Prophet called unrighteous decrees. "Wo unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and write grievouſneſs which they have preſcribed. To turn away the needy from judgment, and to take the right from the poor of my people; that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherleſs." (a) Such bands of wickedneſs muſt be looſed before ſuch as made them can obſerve a faſt acceptably to the Lord; for till this is done, their faſt will want one eſſential characteriſtic of a faſt that the Lord hath choſen. While the rulers of a nation are inforcing daily, arbitrary acts of oppreſſion, it is abundantly daring in them to pretend to keep a faſt to the Lord. Is this the faſt that I have choſen ſaith Jehovah, to bow down his head like a bullruſh, and ſpread ſackcloth under him? WILT THOU CALL THIS A FAST AND AN ACCEPTABLE DAY TO THE LORD? An arbitrary and unrelenting tyrant may hang down his

(a) Iſaiah x. 1.

head,

head, and turn up his eyes, in hypocritical geſtures of devotion, for the ſake of being accounted *pious*; but he who ſeeth not as man ſeeth, ſays, *Who hath required this at your hand?* Wilt THOU *call this a faſt and an acceptable day to the Lord?*

The deſign of the faſt now appointed, is to addreſs the God of mercy for aid to aſſiſt the preſent adminiſtration in carrying on, what is called a *juſt* and *neceſſary* war, againſt our enemies. Among theſe enemies the American colonies are included. The juſtice and neceſſity of this part of the war, is very doubtful, and the other parts of it do not at all appear neceſſary. Till the firſt part of it had been proved to be juſt, it was ſoon enough to have determined any of its departments neceſſary; for what is not juſt can never be neceſſary. Beſides, what is doubtful ought not to be aſſigned as a reaſon for war. The juſtice of the laws upon which this war proceeds ought to be ſelf evident: for blood ought never be ſhed but when guilt is as clear as a ſunbeam. The objects of one department of this war refuſe the charge of rebellion, and they appeal to the fundamental laws of the empire, whether their claims are not the ſame with thoſe that their fathers and the whole Britiſh nation inſiſted upon at the revolution, and have ſecured to them by the laws of the land. They ſay, they do not reſiſt the laws, nor refuſe to obey the Sovereign, but reſiſt the violence of an adminiſtration, that has diſgraced the conſtitution by procuring oppreſſive ſtatutes. If theſe modern ſtatutes are contrary to the wholeſome conſtitution of England, they ought to be repealed before the faſt, otherwiſe it muſt be conſidered as a faſt for carrying on a war to ſet aſide all that the mercy of Providence wrought for this nation at the glorious revolution. But ſuppoſe that theſe laws are doubtful, and have been framed by *raſh* and *adventurous* men

in

In the heat of paſſion and oppoſition, they ought not to be reaſons of war and deſolation. Nothing problematical ought to be reaſons of war; and that the grounds of the American war are doubtful is manifeſt, becauſe the nation is divided concerning them, and the greateſt number of individuals have always been againſt it. In a doubtful caſe a nation has no juſt right to go to war, but they have ſtill leſs reaſon to aſk the Lord to aſſiſt them; for there is no faith in ſuch a doubtful proceeding, and whatſoever is not faith is ſin. Men that are ſtrongly inclined from principles of prejudice and worldly intereſt, may attempt to trim this ſubject, according to their wiſhes, in the beſt manner they can; but after all is done, their arguments will be like the lamps of the fooliſh virgins mentioned in the goſpel—*dark for want of oil to give them light.*

The promoters of this faſt, and the ruinous war it is intended to ſupport, would have behaved with more propriety had they aſked counſel of the lord before they began this war that now is ſo heavy upon their hands. But there is ſtrong reaſon to ſuſpect, that they began without conſulting the will of God; and that this hypocritical faſt will have no other effect, than to aggravate their guilt and iniquity. They have tried two experiments already without ſucceſs, and without reforming one falſe ſtep they have taken, there is little to hope that without reformation that ever the Almighty will regard our faſting. It is a ſtrange fancy that prevails in this nation, that our rulers always begin war without conſulting God; and ſuſtain themſelves perfect judges of the lawfulneſs thereof; and when things go wrong through their own folly and wickedneſs, they cry to the Almighty to help them without correcting their miſtakes or amending their errors. It is none of the profeſſed ends of this faſt,

according to what is ſignified in the proclamation, to aſk the lord to inſtruct them whether they have erred or not, or whether they ſhould retract what they have done, or what they intend to do; but to implore aid to aſſiſt them to go on. They do not want direction how to proceed, but ſtrength to follow their own wiſdom. This is really mocking of God. They want not God to teach them their folly, but that he would enable them to proceed in it. The *wiſdom*, and *juſtice*, of the cauſe is ſettled already; it is a *juſt* and *neceſſary* war: there is nothing wanting but power and ſucceſs. They are worſe than the Greeks at the ſiege of Troy, for they conſulted Apollo concerning the cauſe of their ill ſucceſs, and reformed the error when they were told of it. They reſtored Chryeis, and made an atonement for their fault. But our managers want not to know the cauſe of their misfortunes, but have them removed without removing the cauſe. They know the cauſe perfectly, and it is prodigiouſly impious to aſk aſſiſtance of the lord to proceed in a cauſe in which they never acknowledged his wiſdom by aſking his advice.

They do not behave like Joſhua when Iſrael was defeated before the men of *Ai*; he aſked counſel of the lord, and found out the *curſed thing* that was the cauſe of their misfortune. Were the men concerned in carrying on this war as ſtrictly examined as Iſrael, there is reaſon to fear that the ſame curſed thing would be found among them, that was found in Achan's tent. Two hundred ſhekels of ſilver, a wedge of gold, and a Babyloniſh garment, were but ſmall matters to the perquiſites that are diſpoſed of in ſome offices.

But I muſt now put the promoters of this faſt in mind of what they may eaſily know, that what they intend

intend to aſk upon their day of humiliation, the Almighty neither will nor can grant them, nor to any people elſe upon the ſame principle. What is the intention of this faſt? Is it not to crave divine aſſiſtance to execute modern ſtatutes, which are either doubtful in their nature, or contrary to fundamental laws.—And with fire and ſword againſt their brethren, who cannot perceive them in the ſame light that they do. This is inſtead of looſing the band of wickedneſs, wickedly ſeeking to tie them. If the promoters of this faſt cannot prove theſe ſtatutes upon the authority of which they carry on this war conſiſtent with the moral attributes of God and the laws of the Britiſh empire, they cannot expect, till they looſe them, that the Almighty will regard their prayers any otherwiſe than with indignation and abhorrence.

According to the ſtile of revelation, all unjuſt and arbitrary decrees are bands of wickedneſs by whatſoever human authority they are impoſed, becauſe they are contrary to moral juſtice, and are oppreſſive to the people. And though they can never bind the conſciences of men, and ſo have no moral influence, yet they are cords of oppreſſion, that ſit hard upon their bodies and their temporal intereſt. Laws that are unfriendly to the temporal intereſts, and general good of ſociety; laws that are made to exalt a few to power and dignity, by ſpunging, ſqueezing, and oppreſſing all other ranks of people, though contrived by angels, and executed by ſaints, are bands of wickedneſs, which may ſuffer for tranſgreſſing, but can never ſin in diſobeying.

When the rulers of a nation, to gratify their own luſts of pride and ambition, impoſe heavy and oppreſſive burdens upon the people by legiſlative authority, they eſtabliſh iniquity by a law, which in

the *ſtricteſt* ſenſe of the words, is a band of iniquity. The luſts of princes and their ſervants, often create their own wants, and render them neceſſitous; they then make uſe of their power and influence to procure laws to oblige others to ſupply them, whether they are able or not; and what aggravates the evil, when the ſubjects know and feel that they are not able to anſwer the heavy demands of power, they are not allowed to be judges of their own abilities. Thoſe that rule over others ought to be ſober and temperate, and make the reaſonable finances of ſtate ſerve them in executing their offices. Unneceſſary ſplendor and expence in government are inconſiſtent with both reaſon and religion, which teach us that it is one of the great ends of laws and government to reſtrain unruly appetites and irregular paſſions. It is ſinful in princes to coin expenſive offices to ſerve their favourites and oppreſs their ſubjects. Nothing can be more audacious, than for men appointed to be guardians of ſociety, with a deſign to make individuals eaſy and happy to pretend to come before the Lord in the moſt ſolemn manner to aſk his aid and aſſiſtance to oppreſs them. Such is undoubtedly the language of the enſuing faſt, and of the conduct of its authors and deviſers.

The poor in all parts of Britain are groaning under a heavy load of taxes, deviſed for new purpoſes, and impoſed by new ſtatutes. But for what reaſons? Where is the neceſſity? What way are they applied? Are they not intended to carry violence and deſolation, fire and ſword, among a people, whoſe only fault is that they are endowed with principles and a ſpirit which Engliſhmen once gloried in, and which ſaved this nation from popery and arbitrary power, and will not part with what God and nature, and the laws have given them, to gratify the luſts of men

men who have degenerated from the noble generous temper of their anceſtors, into eaſtern nabobs, and Turkiſh baſhaws. Theſe men have thought fit to contrive war foreign and domeſtic, to gratify their depraved paſſions, and the rich and poor throughout the nation muſt be oppreſſed to carry it on; bands of wickedneſs are twiſted one year after another, and the nation groans in chains. All the neceſſaries of life are in ſome way or other taxed; our ſmoke cannot aſcend to the ſky, nor a ray of light peep in at our windows without paying an heavy impoſt. The inſide as well as the outſide of our houſes are aſſeſſed; and poor people who cannot, without great difficulty, afford to pay five pounds for a houſe to lodge in through the year, muſt now pay five ſixpences more. And for what reaſon? To carry on a war that originated in injuſtice, has been carried on with folly, and attended with diſgrace and diſappointment.—To ſhed innocent blood, and carry death and deſolation acroſs the Atlantic to deſtroy our brethren, to ſatiate the voracious luſts of a few ambitious men, who would waſte the globe, and ruin heaven itſelf, provided they had the management thereof. Ah, Britain! will the God of mercy, who delights in forgiving offences, hear your prayers or regard your faſting, when you are twiſting cords of oppreſſion, inſtead of looſing bands of wickedneſs. Ah, ye rulers of the land, whither are ye haſtening? You cannot run long when you are ruſhing upon the boſſes of Jehovah's buckler! *When you faſt for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs*, do you imagine that the God of mercy will hear your prayers with acceptance, or regard your faſting any otherwiſe than ſetting them down to the ſum total of your paſt iniquities?

Would Britain wiſh to have her prayers regarded, and her faſting accepted in the ſight of the Almighty, let

let her looſe the bands of wickedneſs that ſhe has twiſted, and break the chains that ſhe has forged for her brethren abroad, and the ſubjects at home. Let her repeal theſe novel and hoſtile laws made againſt her theſe colonies, and that have been made in conſequence thereof, which are ſo hard to be borne by the people in the mother-country. Let her withdraw her fleets and armies, and ſpeak comfortably to her brethren, whom ſhe has ſo much injured. Till this is done her faſts will want one eſſential characteriſtic of a faſt which the Lord hath choſen. In the form of prayer for faſting laſt year, the biſhops aſk the Lord for ſtrength to reſiſt the Americans. Their graces and lordſhips certainly knew, that there was no occaſion for reſiſtance on the part of Britain, with regard to the colonies. They had nothing to do but call home their forces, and none would trouble them. They meant to have ſaid, *Lord give us the good fortune to kill them:* but it ſtuck in their throat, and they ſtammered out the word, *reſiſt*, unawares. I wiſh there may not be ſpite in the caſe; for the coloniſts do not love biſhops, and for that reaſon their reverences cannot forgive them.

II. It is a poſitive requiſite of a faſt, which the Lord hath choſen to undo heavy burdens; to burſt them aſunder and remove them all together. It is not ſufficient to lighten them a little; they muſt be totally removed, as far as they are oppreſſive. If they are not unjuſt and oppreſſive, they do not come under the deſcription of heavy burdens; but if they are oppreſſive they muſt be wholly taken away. The *Biſhop of London*, in his new tranſlation of this prophecy, ſeems to have heſitated when he came to this verſe. He renders the word which is in our verſion *undo*, by the word *looſen*, which greatly ſoftens the ſenſe. He was afraid to ſay *burſt aſunder*

der or *break in pieces*, which is the true ſignification of the Hebrew word, becauſe this would have been too ſtrong an expreſſion; and would have implied, that when legiſlators make unjuſt and oppreſſive ſtatutes, they muſt paſs over all forms in repealing them, before they can obſerve a faſt which the Lord hath choſen. The word *looſen*, has much the ſame import with the word *ſlacken*, and implies *ſome* eaſe or relief, but not perfect liberty from the burden. But in the words of the text *looſen* will not do; the burden muſt be annihilated and *totally* deſtroyed. The word undo in our tranſlation is exceedingly proper, and is well underſtood by the common people: they make uſe of it to ſignify total ruin. and when they ſay any thing will *undo* them, they mean it will *rain* them. Therefore all heavy, oppreſſive burdens muſt be unmade and not merely looſened, before thoſe who lay them on can obſerve an acceptable day to the Lord. (a)

The commandment in the words of the text is directed to the rulers of Judah, who at this time were grievouſly oppreſſing the people; who to gratify, their own ambitious views and depraved inclinations, employed all their power and authority, to make the ſubjects contribute to their deſigns. This, in proceſs of time, became very oppreſſive; for new projects were continually deviſed, which their pride

(a) What will explain this point clearly is the ſame uſe of the Hebrew word נתק in Pſal. ii. iii. נגתקה את־מוסרותימו, Let us break or BURST THEIR BANDS ASUNDER. The Prophet Jeremiah would have ſet the biſhop right in this point, and ſhewn him the true ſenſe of the word נתק, Jer. v. 5. I will get me up to the great men, and will ſpeak to them; for they have known the way of the Lord and the judgment of their God.—But theſe ותדו שבדם עול נתקו מסדות have altogether broken the yoke, and BURST THE BONDS.

ſuggeſted

ſuggeſted, and the poor were made to pay for the expence of their execution, though they were directly contrary to their intereſt. This will always happen when power is in the hands of covetous, proud, and ambitious men, who conſider all the inferior ranks of mankind made for no other purpoſe, than to ſerve the ends of their pride, folly, and ambition. The poor in the days of Amos were ſold for a pair of ſhoes: the rulers thought no crime to oppreſs them in the laſt degree; and there is but little difference between making men ſlaves, and taking away from them the means of living.

Government would never be expenſive provided rulers were honeſt and virtuous; it does not require much to ſupport the real dignity of government, but it requires much to gratify the luſts of princes and their ſervants. The voracious and ungovernable appetites of courties and placemen, come upon the ſubjects with heavy demands. Theſe lay the greateſt impoſts upon the poor people. Virtuous rulers will not require much to themſelves for doing their duty; they will conſider virtue and integrity greater honours than robes of ermine, and ſplendid equipage. *Camillus* and *Cincinatus* would have governed an empire a whole year at a ſmaller expence, than Nero beſtowed upon a ſupper; and what would have ſerved the whole ſenate in the days of the commonwealth, would not have been a mouthful to Nero. Fame is not to be truſted, if a great number of our preſent burdens do not proceed from the luxuries of the great, who after they have ſpent their fortunes upon their luſts, turn ſlaves to the court for *places* and *penſions*, which the honeſt poor are obliged to ſupport. Such corrupted minions are ready on all occaſions to vote perdition to a nation, provided they can have their luſt fulfilled and their paſſions gratified. Theſe men inſtead

of

of undoing burdens, undo nations, and are themſelves the greateſt burden. Yet theſe godly children of diſſipation, and voluptuouſneſs have the daring aſſurance to call for a national faſt, when all the year through, they are employed in wanton laſciviouſneſs, gamboling, and waſting the public treaſure. To ſupport a ſwarm of theſe impure locuſts, the virtuous labourer, and honeſt tradeſman muſt be burdened with taxes beyond all reaſonable bounds. Say not, O ye ſons of diſſipation, and prodigality, that it is for the ſupport of government, that theſe burdens are laid on, for we know the contrary. Is it a dignity to government, or a real ſupport to it, to maintain men in high offices of ſtate, whoſe characters are a ſcandal to ſociety, and a burleſque of all good rule and moral laws? Does it dignify and ſupport government, to waſte the ſubſtance of a nation, upon Paphian rites, and ſenſual pleaſures, and in ſupporting a ſeraglio of fallen angels, together with a number of young ſprigs of iniquity, educated in the ſame practices, and initiated in all the arts of ſeduction and impurity? Yet fame reports, that for ſuch purpoſes is the treaſure of the nation waſted, the public money ſquandered, and the poor more and more oppreſſed. Our *dignified faſters* muſt not expect that the lord will regard their faſting, until ſuch time as they *undo the heavy burdens*, which the nation is groaning under. Till they do this, their faſt is not ſuch a faſt as the Lord hath choſen.

It has a very ſtrange aſpect to ſee men who are continuing in abſurd and prepoſterous meaſures, which even children would bluſh to be authors of, ſo impious as to ſollicit heaven to aſſiſt them, when they may be ſure, that this cannot be done provided God is *juſt* and *holy*. The Jewiſh rulers muſt have made a ridiculous figure in the eſteem of the prophet, when they obſerved forms of faſting and humiliation,

in the very inſtant they were contriving grievous oppreſſions to others, and living in all ſorts of voluptuouſneſs themſelves. It is exceeding farcical and abſurd, to behold men who deſpiſe all religion both in their hearts and practice, among the firſt to inforce an exerciſe which cannot be performed without the fear of the Lord. Would the deviſers of the enſuing faſt really deſire that God ſhould regard it in mercy, they ought to change their form of prayer from what it was the laſt year, and reform their own converſations. Inſtead of praying for ſucceſs to the preſent war, they ought to pray to God to forgive their wickedneſs in beginning it, and carrying it on: ſpeedily give it over, withdraw their troops, take ſhame to themſelves, and bluſh for their iniquity. With regard to their private deportment, they muſt mortify their pride, give over their luxury, diſmiſs their fallen angels, and live ſober and chaſte;—dignify government by their ſelf denial and mortification, ſerve their country for the dividends of inheritance, which Providence has given them more than others; repeal the heavy tax laws that have been made of late years, that the poor may be able to live with more eaſe, and pray to God for their ſuperiors.

Although perſons in high life think little of the prayers of the poor, yet I will hint a ſecret to them, which perhaps they were not thinking of, and that is, —that in times like theſe in which we live, the prayers of the poor are the only prayers that the Almighty regards. "He will regard the prayer of "the deſtitute, and not deſpiſe their prayer; "this ſhall be written for the generations to come— "for he hath looked down from the height of his "ſanctuary, from heaven did the Lord behold the "earth; to hear the groaning of the priſoner, to "looſe thoſe that are appointed unto death. "For the oppreſſion of the poor, and the ſighs of the "needy,

" needy, will I ariſe (ſaith the Lord) I will ſet him " in ſafety from thoſe that puff at him."—There are not ſuch promiſes made in all the Scripture to the noble and the rich. Their graces and reverences have generally as little influence at the throne of mercy, as the poor in this world have at the thrones of temporal princes. Although many vain men in high life, deſpiſe the poor on account of their meanneſs, and generally ſpeak diſreſpectfully of them, yet many of the poor are incapable of doing ſuch mean actions as ſome of their ſuperiors in rank are capable of: they have in general a truer ſenſe of conſcience, and are better acquainted with God. Even the moſt vicious among the vulgar, are not equal in profligacy to thoſe of the ſame character among the great. And the common people are not ſo ignorant, but they can eaſily perceive that thoſe who rule over others, ſhould themſelves walk according to moral laws. They conſider government in the hands of the wicked, unworthy of that reſpect that is due to virtuous rulers; and they are fully perſuaded that it can never anſwer the purpoſes of felicity to ſociety, when it is made more ſubſervient to the paſſions of governors, than to the good of the public.

If the deviſers of this faſt only heard what the common people ſay concerning it, it would aſtoniſh them. They really make many ſhrewd remarks upon it. They in the firſt place obſerve, that the miniſtry are now grievouſly pinched when they betake themſelves to the Lord for aſſiſtance. They ſay there muſt be loſſes that we have heard nothing of in the Gazette, otherwiſe we ſhould have had no faſting. When the two Brothers were ſucceſsful, and Burgoyne was driving all before him, there was not a word of humiliation or of ſeeking the Lord. Ah! it is all over now when our miniſtry turn devout. When the

the ſailors begin to pray there is no hope of ſafety, the veſſel is about ſinking.—Had they intended to have had heaven on their ſide they ought to have begun with aſking the will of God, and laid the foundation of their plan in juſtice; but now when they have miſmanaged all, do they imagine that the Lord will regard them? There is yet juſtice in heaven.—What have our brethren done to deſerve the treatment they have met with? We would do the ſame things ourſelves, in the ſame circumſtances; and muſt we aſk God to give aid to meaſures which our own hearts condemn? That would be folly in the extreme.—We ſhould not wonder if there were thunder and lightning all that day, or ſome terrible earthquake: it is a moſt dreadful thing to mock God. It is marvellous that the biſhops ſhould have any hand in it. Alas! they mind nothing except honours and preferment, otherwiſe they would never have engaged in ſuch awful and profane buſineſs. God has bleſſed us with great abundance for ſome years paſt; but it will be a miracle if there is not a famine in the land before it be long.—What although we ſhould all join againſt the French, what will it ſignify? when ſuch baſe men are at the helm of affairs, we are ſure of nothing: they would waſte the world, and when we have aſſiſted them to ſerve their own purpoſes, they will ſerve us as they intended to ſerve the Coloniſts. They ſhall neither have our prayers nor our wiſhes, except to wiſh them to be called to account for the evil they have done.—This is certainly not *ſuch a faſt as the Lord hath choſen: to looſe the bands of wickedneſs and undo heavy burdens.* Alas no! This is *faſting for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs.* Good Lord deliver us from it; it will ruin us all. Many ſuch obſervations do the people make, concerning the enſunig Faſt.—But I ſhall now conclude.

F I N I S.